

UNCLASSIFIED



Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

ISP-I-26-09

Office of Inspections

January 2026

Inspection of Embassy Apia, Samoa

BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

UNCLASSIFIED



HIGHLIGHTS

Office of Inspector General
United States Department of State

ISP-I-26-09

What OIG Inspected

OIG inspected the executive direction, policy and program implementation, resource management, and information management operations of Embassy Apia.

What OIG Recommends

OIG made 11 recommendations to Embassy Apia. In its comments on the draft report, the embassy concurred with all 11 recommendations. OIG considers all 11 recommendations resolved. The embassy's formal response is reprinted in its entirety in Appendix B.

January 2026

OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS

BUREAU OF EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

Inspection of Embassy Apia, Samoa

What OIG Found

- Embassy Apia's Chargé d'Affaires, ad interim, generally complied with Department of State standards for tone at the top and standards of conduct, execution of foreign policy goals and objectives, adherence to internal controls, security and emergency planning, and equal employment opportunity. The Chargé d'Affaires engaged all elements of the Country Team, fostering professionalism and mutual respect in the workplace.
- Due to the embassy's small size, it relied on support from Mission New Zealand and Department regional offices in Manila, Philippines.
- Embassy Apia had deficiencies related to public diplomacy, consular operations, resource management, and information management.
- Spotlights on Success: The Chargé d'Affaires established a virtual Samoa-specific Country Team meeting format that facilitated policy and operational coordination among those agencies with responsibility for Samoa but without a physical presence in Apia. Additionally, the Consular Section used restaurant-style pagers to improve interview efficiency.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
BACKGROUND.....	1
OPERATING ENVIRONMENT	2
Mission New Zealand and Regional Support for Samoa.....	2
INSPECTION RESULTS.....	4
Spotlights on Success	6
Findings	7
PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS	18
APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY.....	19
APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	21

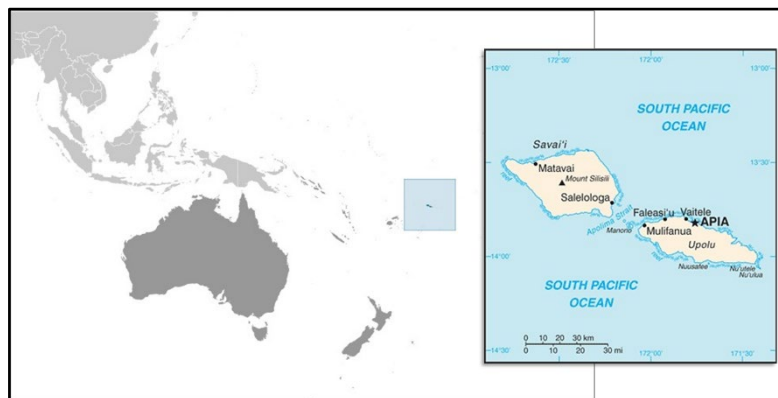
INTRODUCTION

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) evaluated the executive direction, policy and program implementation, resource management, and information management operations of Embassy Apia, Samoa, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980.¹ Some of OIG's findings and recommendations related to the embassy's information management operations are included in this report and others are in the companion Sensitive But Unclassified annex.

On January 21, 2025, the Secretary of State issued guidance to the Department of State (Department) on the Administration's priorities.² The Department subsequently disseminated initial guidance on foreign assistance, public diplomacy, consular operations, personnel evaluation, planning and policy documents, and other Department activities. At the time of this inspection, the Department was developing detailed implementation guidance on these and other policy initiatives. Therefore, OIG did not assess the embassy's implementation of the new guidance as part of this inspection.

BACKGROUND

The United States established diplomatic relations with Samoa (then called Western Samoa) in 1971, following its independence from a New Zealand-administered trusteeship in 1962. The Treaty of Berlin divided the Samoan Islands into two political entities in 1899, with the eastern islands becoming a U.S. territory, American Samoa. The distance between Samoa and American Samoa is approximately 45 miles.



Figures 1 and 2: Locator and country map for Samoa (Source: CIA World Factbook, as of June 2025).

In regional and international forums, the United States and Samoa work together to mitigate disaster risk, manage fishery resources, promote sustainable economic development in the Pacific region, and strengthen the tenets of democracy and human rights. The United States is one of Samoa's largest export markets, accounting for approximately 18 percent of Samoan exports in 2021; American Samoa accounts for an additional 21 percent.

Through its embassy in Apia, the United States engages with the Samoan government on bilateral and multilateral issues including regional security and international law enforcement. In June 2012, the United States and Samoa signed a Mutual Law Enforcement Agreement that

¹ See Appendix A for additional details.

² Cable 25 STATE 5156, "New Administration Priorities," January 21, 2025.

allows U.S. law enforcement vessels with a Samoan official on board to perform maritime policing activities.

According to the Department's biennial ranking, Embassy Apia is considered a category 1 embassy.³ Specifically, the Department describes a category 1 embassy as a special purpose embassy and represents the United States in a country where it is important to maintain a U.S. presence despite limited requirements for advocacy, liaison, and coordination in the capital. The other U.S. government agency at the embassy is the Peace Corps.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Mission New Zealand and Regional Support for Samoa

The ambassador to New Zealand, when the position is encumbered, is also accredited to Samoa.⁴ The Deputy Chief of Mission at Embassy Apia serves as Charge d'Affaires, ad interim (Chargé), except when the ambassador is physically in Samoa, and carries out daily management of Embassy Apia. At the time of this inspection, Embassy Apia's other U.S. direct-hire staff included one political-economic officer and one public diplomacy officer.⁵ Due to the small size of the embassy, the embassy relied on support from Mission New Zealand,⁶ temporary duty staff, and the Department's regional offices in Manila, Philippines. Mission New Zealand provided consular and security services⁷ and some public diplomacy support for Embassy Apia, while the regional offices in Manila provided management support.

A 2020 memorandum of understanding (MOU) established the framework for Mission New Zealand providing consular services in Samoa.⁸ No officers assigned to Embassy Apia were assigned as consular officers. However, one or more officers maintained consular commissions⁹ and provided consular services, for example, by responding to U.S. citizens' arrests or assisting during medical crises. This duty to provide services to U.S. citizens sometimes required de-prioritizing other embassy responsibilities.

³ The Department's rankings of its overseas posts are based on the "level and type of work required to achieve our bilateral and multilateral core diplomatic mission." Overseas posts are ranked on a scale from 1 to 5+.

⁴ At the time of this inspection, Mission New Zealand and Embassy Apia did not have an ambassador.

⁵ In addition to the 3 U.S. direct-hire staff, Embassy Apia had 18 locally employed staff.

⁶ Mission New Zealand comprises Embassy Wellington, Consulate General Auckland, and the U.S. Antarctic Program in Christchurch.

⁷ See OIG, *Classified Inspection of Embassy Wellington and Constituent Post, New Zealand, Cook Islands, and Niue* (ISP-S-26-08, released November 2025).

⁸ Consulate General Auckland provides consular services for all of New Zealand. Embassy Wellington does not have a Consular Section. Under the provisions of the 2020 MOU, consular staff from Consulate General Auckland periodically visit Embassy Apia to provide routine consular services like visa interviews and passport application processing.

⁹ A consular commission is provided by the President or Secretary of State to individuals assigned to consular positions or performing consular functions abroad.








A 2015 MOU established the framework for Mission New Zealand public diplomacy support to Embassy Apia. During this inspection, the embassy and Mission New Zealand began updating the MOU to clarify what resource and media outreach support the mission would provide Embassy Apia. Embassy Apia's Public Diplomacy Section administered two American Corners.¹⁰ After the arrival of Embassy Apia's first public diplomacy officer in 2024, the section began managing its public diplomacy grants.

Embassy Apia relies on the Department's regional offices in Manila, Philippines, for management support. Previously, Mission New Zealand provided remote oversight and conducted routine site visits to support Embassy Apia's management platform. In October 2024, facility management support for Embassy Apia shifted to the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations' Regional Support Center in Manila, although the details of those responsibilities were not formally documented. In March 2025, enacted by an MOU,¹¹ responsibility for Embassy Apia's financial management, general services, diplomatic technology (DT), and human resource functions transitioned to the Manila Regional Support Service (MRSS). However, the MOU was unclear or did not directly address if MRSS or Embassy Apia had oversight responsibility for the embassy's DT operations, such as information systems security and mail and pouch services, and receiving and tracking property. Embassy Apia and MRSS acknowledged that these specific details had not been determined and there were conflicting views on who had responsibility for some roles, such as records management. These issues are discussed in more detail in the Findings section of this report and in the companion Sensitive But Unclassified annex.

¹⁰ Embassy Apia administered two American Corners, one in Apia and another in Salelologa. American Corners are partnerships with local institutions offering a range of American Space programming, governed by a memorandum of understanding between the institution and the embassy.

¹¹ "Memorandum of Understanding Tier III MRSS Support for Embassy [Apia]," effective March 11, 2025.

Table 1: Embassy Apia, Mission New Zealand, and Regional Responsibilities for Samoa

Area	Embassy Apia	Mission New Zealand	Regional Support
 Executive Direction	✓	✓	
 Political-Economic	✓		
 Public Diplomacy	✓	—	
 Consular	—	✓	
 Resource Management	✓		✓
 Information Management	✓		✓
 Security		✓	

Notes: Mission New Zealand supported limited public diplomacy activities for Samoa, and Embassy Apia provided some consular services.

Source: OIG generated from Department data.

INSPECTION RESULTS

OIG found Embassy Apia’s Chargé generally complied with Department standards for tone at the top and standards of conduct,¹² execution of foreign policy goals and objectives, adherence to internal controls, security and emergency planning, and equal employment opportunity. OIG found the Chargé¹³ fostered collaboration and communication by engaging with all elements of the Country Team, including those responsible for support and programs in Samoa but not resident in Apia. In interviews and responses to OIG questionnaires, embassy U.S. direct-hire and locally employed staff told OIG they welcomed the Chargé’s efforts to institute standard operating procedures and to focus on accomplishing U.S. foreign policy objectives. Staff appreciated the Chargé’s emphasis on “excellence, grace, and gratitude,” which empowered employees and fostered professionalism and mutual respect in the workplace.

OIG assessed Embassy Apia’s two-member Political-Economic Section’s leadership and management, policy implementation, reporting, and Leahy vetting, and found the section

¹² The Department’s leadership and management principles outlined in 3 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 1214b are (1) model integrity, (2) plan strategically, (3) be decisive and take responsibility, (4) communicate, (5) learn and innovate constantly, (6) be self-aware, (7) collaborate, (8) value and develop people, (9) manage conflict, and (10) foster resilience.

¹³ The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) in Samoa serves as Charge d’Affaires, ad interim, except when the ambassador is physically in Samoa. Following the Ambassador’s final visit to Samoa in October 2024, chief of mission authority was transferred to the Chargé. As Chargé, the officer performed the duties of chief of mission and DCM.

generally functioned according to Department standards. Washington officials, including interagency representatives, praised the embassy's reporting and policy implementation work. Although Embassy Apia is a category 1 embassy, it is charged with coordinating the work of U.S. government agencies that regularly visit and have responsibilities in Samoa. For example, from October 2023 to November 2024, Embassy Apia facilitated 47 official trips, involving more than 1,000 U.S. personnel, including the commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard and several ship ports of call; a May 2024 U.S. Naval Academy rugby team sports diplomacy tour (while two other official visits were ongoing); different U.S. Army units; and Drug Enforcement Administration officials.

During this inspection, Embassy Apia corrected two issues identified by OIG: the Public Diplomacy Section drafted a new media policy, and the DT unit tested and posted the Department's cyber incident response plan for the Sensitive But Unclassified network.

OIG identified two innovative aspects of the embassy's operations, which are described in the Spotlights on Success section below. OIG found deficiencies in certain aspects of the embassy's public diplomacy, consular operations, resource management, and information management operations, as detailed in the Findings section of this report.

OIG provided a draft of this report to Department entities for review and comment on the findings and recommendations. OIG issued 11 recommendations to Embassy Apia. The embassy's complete response can be found in Appendix B.

Spotlights on Success

Spotlight on Success: Virtual Samoa Country Team Meeting Facilitated Coordination	
Issue	Embassy New Zealand’s Country Team meetings typically included a discussion of Samoa-specific issues at the end of the meetings. The Embassy Apia Chargé participated virtually in the meetings, but not all relevant Department offices and other agencies responsible for Samoa were included because they were not located in either Wellington or Apia.
Success or Innovation	In February 2025, the Chargé, with the previous Ambassador’s approval, established a separate, regular virtual Samoa-specific Country Team meeting. Country Team members, including members not resident at Embassy Apia, told OIG they welcomed the initiative because it facilitated the exchange of policy and operational information and enabled coordination and de-confliction between agencies with similar programs in Samoa. Non-resident Country Team members told OIG that their ability to accomplish their missions in the broader Oceania region would benefit from having this model repeated in other small, isolated embassies in the region. The Chargé told OIG the format facilitated and improved his ability to effectively shape and execute U.S. policy and programs in Samoa.
Significance	This initiative directly supported U.S. foreign policy objectives for U.S. agencies with responsibilities in Samoa.

Spotlight on Success: Embassy Apia Used Pagers to Improve Consular Interview Efficiency	
Issue	Embassy Apia’s small and crowded consular waiting area often prevented applicants from either waiting in line for their interviews or hearing announcements calling them to the windows for their appointments. Delays in bringing applicants to the window slowed consular processing and exacerbated crowding in the waiting area.
Success or Innovation	With the support of the Bureau of Consular Affairs, Embassy Apia procured restaurant-style pagers that light up and vibrate to alert applicants to present themselves at the interview window.
Significance	The use of pagers eliminated the need for loud and disruptive public announcements, brought applicants to the windows quickly, and reduced crowding in the waiting area.

Findings

Policy and Program Implementation: Public Diplomacy	
Issue	<p><i>Public Diplomacy Section Lacked Strategic Documents for Management and Coordination of Its Digital Media</i></p> <p>Embassy Apia’s Public Diplomacy Section lacked two strategic documents for managing and coordinating its digital media: a social media strategy to promote its strategic objectives and a crisis communications plan for Samoa’s crisis response operations. Although the Public Diplomacy Section relied on support from Embassy Wellington’s media team for managing its digital media platforms, the section was responsible for establishing its public diplomacy strategy.</p>
Criteria	<p>Cable 24 STATE 134222;¹⁴ the Department’s Social Media Hub article, “Social Media Strategy Template;”¹⁵ 10 Foreign Affairs Handbook (FAH)-1 H-061; 10 FAH-1 H-063a; 10 FAH-1 H-063.1a, d; 10 FAH-1 H-066a, d</p>
Significance	<p>The absence of a strategic plan for social media engagement risks misalignment of an embassy’s resources and media outreach with Department priorities, inability to measure success, establish a common voice, and ensure proper oversight. The lack of a crisis communications plan may result in the inability to communicate accurate and timely official information via social media during an emergency.</p>
Recommendation 1	
<p>Embassy Apia, in coordination with Embassy Wellington, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Bureau of Global Public Affairs, should develop a social media strategy and a crisis communications plan for Samoa. (Action: Embassy Apia, in coordination with Embassy Wellington, EAP, and GPA)</p>	
Management Response	<p>Concurred.</p>

¹⁴ Cable 24 STATE 134222, “Digital Dispatch – Your Answer for All Things Social Media and Digital Policy,” December 24, 2024, describes the Department’s Social Media Hub as a resource for guidance on the use of social media. The cable also states that overseas posts are required to update their digital crisis communications plans annually. These plans should be shared with overseas post’s Regional Digital Coordinator and the Bureau of Global Public Affairs’ Digital Strategy and Training team.

¹⁵ According to the February 2022 Social Media Hub article, “Social Media Strategy Template,” “Missions and bureaus should use social media and other digital engagement technologies to reach target audience segments and achieve specific outcomes relevant to their strategic goals. A well-crafted strategy defines the role social media will play in accomplishing overall outreach goals, aligned with broader mission or Department goals.”

Policy and Program Implementation: Consular Operations	
Issue	<p><i>Embassy Apia's Consular Interview Facilities Did Not Meet Department Standards</i></p> <p>Embassy Apia's public service windows for consular interviews did not meet Department standards for a dignified, efficient, and comfortable space. Specifically, malfunctioning microphones in these windows forced Consular Section staff and visa applicants to speak in raised voices through open portions of the interview windows, which made the interviews audible throughout the waiting area.</p>
Criteria	7 FAH-1 H-281a, 7 FAH-1 H-463
Significance	Without a fully functioning microphone and sound system, the ability of consular officers to conduct consular business in a manner consistent with Department public service standards, while providing an environment in which consular applicants may confidentially discuss sensitive topics, is compromised.
Recommendation 2	
Embassy Apia should bring its consular interview facilities into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)	
Management Response	Concurred.

Resource Management: Facility Management	
Issue	<i>Embassy Did Not Conduct Seismic Safety Evaluations for All Residences</i> OIG found two of the embassy’s three residential properties did not have a seismic hazard rating assessment. According to 15 Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) 252.6b(1), embassies in elevated seismic areas, such as Apia, should evaluate the seismic safety of their residential buildings using one or more approved methods. The Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations rates the occurrence or frequency of earthquakes in Apia as “moderately high.”
Criteria	15 FAM 252.6b(1)
Significance	Failure to conduct seismic evaluations and mitigate identified deficiencies risks the life and safety of residents and could result in fatalities or serious injuries in the event of an earthquake.
Recommendation 3	
Embassy Apia, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should evaluate all residential properties for seismic risk in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia, in coordination with OBO)	
Management Response	Concurred.

Resource Management: Facility Management	
Issue and Criteria	<p><i>Embassy Life Safety Programs Did Not Fully Comply With Department Standards</i></p> <p>OIG found deficiencies in life safety programs, which include fire protection and safety, health, and environmental management. Specifically, the embassy did not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have fire watch procedures (15 FAM 813.5b). • Inspect fire extinguishers or test smoke alarms and emergency lights monthly (15 FAM 843c, d; 15 FAM 842b; 15 FAM 844a). • Document successful testing and inspection of all elevator equipment in operation (15 FAM 672.6d). • Provide workplace safety training to supervisors and employees (15 FAM 965e, g, h, j). • Complete safety inspections of all property and complete certifications in the Post Occupational Safety and Health Officer (POSHO) Certification Application System. Of the embassy’s four properties (three residences and the chancery), only one had the required POSHO certification (23 STATE 99058;¹⁶ 15 FAM 971b, c).
Significance	Noncompliant life safety programs increase the risk of hazards that could lead to property damage, injury, or loss of life.
Recommendation 4	
Embassy Apia, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should bring its fire protection and safety, health, and environmental management programs into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia, in coordination with OBO)	
Management Response	Concurred.

¹⁶ Cable 23 STATE 99058, “New Minimum Threshold for POSHO Certification of Non-Residences,” September 7, 2023.

Resource Management: General Services	
Issue and Criteria	<p><i>Embassy Apia’s Contract File Management Did Not Fully Comply With Department Standards</i></p> <p>OIG reviewed contract files for all 55 embassy awards worth approximately \$196,000 and found the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Defense Authorization Act Section 889 documentation from the vendor, which stated that they were not using equipment or services from any prohibited sources or had a waiver, was missing for 19 of the 30 awards requiring it (Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 52.204-25(a), (b); FAR 52.204-26; FAR 4.2102(a), (c); FAR 4.2104). • Defense Base Act worker’s compensation insurance was missing for three of the four awards where it was required (FAR 52.228-3). • Four sole source awards were missing justification and approval documents signed by the contracting officer’s representative, contracting officer, and Department competition advocate (FAR 6.303, FAR 6.304).
Significance	<p>Although OIG determined the embassy monitored contracts, received goods and services for which it had contracted, and addressed contract performance when issues arose, noncompliant contract files increase the risk of contract mismanagement.</p>
Recommendation 5	
<p>Embassy Apia should bring its contract files into compliance with Department and federal requirements. (Action: Embassy Apia)</p>	
Management Response	<p>Concurred.</p>

Resource Management: General Services	
Issue and Criteria	<p><i>Embassy Apia Did Not Manage Property in Accordance With Department Standards</i></p> <p>OIG found the following deficiencies in property management controls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embassy Apia Management Section staff were not designated as receiving clerks or alternate receiving clerks. They had not received formal training in how to use the Integrated Logistics Management System (ILMS),¹⁷ and they were not receiving and entering incoming property into the system as required (14 FAM 413.1; 14 FAM 413.3; 14 FAM 413.5a–c; 15 FAM 661.6; 14 FAM 414.2-1a(1), (2); 14 FAM 411.1e; 14 FAM 411.2-2b(7)). • The embassy accountable property officer did not conduct or document quarterly property spot checks (14 FAM 411.2-2b(8)). • The embassy did not track uniforms and personal protective equipment in ILMS as required (14 FAM 446.1a, c; 14 FAH-1 H-418; 14 FAM 424; 14 FAM 414.2-1a(1), (2); 15 FAM 661.6).
Significance	Noncompliance with Department property management requirements increases the risk of loss of accountability or theft of government property.
Recommendation 6	
Embassy Apia should bring its property management program into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)	
Management Response	Concurred.

¹⁷ ILMS is a unified web-based information system that designed to integrate the Department’s supply chain functions by improving processing in such areas as purchasing, procurement, warehousing, transportation, receiving, property management, personal effects, and diplomatic pouch and mail. ILMS is the only State approved system for property management accountability and consists of several modules.

Information Management: General Management	
Issue and Criteria	<p><i>Diplomatic Technology Unit Lacked Budget and Training Plans</i></p> <p>Embassy Apia did not manage the DT unit in accordance with Department standards. Specifically, the embassy did not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a budget plan for the replacement costs of DT equipment and future projects identified in the embassy's Mission Resource Request (5 FAM 124.2b(1)). • Have a training policy or individual development plan for the sole DT unit staff member (13 FAM 101.2-2(E), 3 FAH-2 H-135.5, 5 FAM 124.4c(3)(a), 5 FAM 124.2b(3)(d)).
Significance	Without a budget plan for equipment and a functional training plan that includes a training policy and individual development plans for DT unit staff, the embassy risks operational inefficiencies, security vulnerabilities, and service disruptions that can hinder productivity, increase costs, and compromise IT operations.
Recommendation 7	
Embassy Apia should create budget and training plans for the Diplomatic Technology unit. (Action: Embassy Apia)	
Management Response	Concurred.

Information Management: Information Security	
Issue	<p><i>Embassy Did Not Have a Functioning Local Configuration Management Protocol</i></p> <p>The embassy did not have a local configuration management protocol or plan to verify that the hardware, software, or network components installed on its networks did not adversely affect the local IT infrastructure under the embassy's operational control. OIG observed locally procured and unapproved network devices on non-enterprise networks, such as wireless routers.</p>
Criteria	5 FAM 114.6-2a; 5 FAM 867(9); 5 FAM 862.3b, c ¹⁸
Significance	Without a functioning local configuration management protocol, the embassy cannot manage risks to the Department's information stemming from unapproved hardware and software on its networks.
Recommendation 8	
Embassy Apia should implement a local configuration management protocol in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)	
Management Response	Concurred.

¹⁸ The Department updated 5 FAM 862 in June 2025, after OIG completed fieldwork for this inspection, to require Bureau of Diplomatic Technology Technical Review Board approval for all hardware and software on Department networks.

Information Management: Knowledge Management	
Issue	<p><i>Embassy Lacked a Knowledge Management Process for Managing Diplomatic Technology Operations</i></p> <p>The embassy lacked a knowledge management process, including up-to-date and consistent documentation necessary to manage its computer, telephone, and radio operations. OIG found that although the DT unit staff member was familiar with most systems duties, he did not maintain documentation to mitigate the risk of inconsistent service quality, ineffective IT support, and disruption of services.</p>
Criteria	5 FAM 867
Significance	Absence of a knowledge management process to update and maintain the documentation necessary to manage operations affects internal controls and diminishes the effectiveness of the DT unit.
Recommendation 9	
Embassy Apia should implement a knowledge management process for capturing, sharing, transferring, and retaining information related to managing computer, telephone, and radio operations. (Action: Embassy Apia)	
Management Response	Concurred.

Information Management: Records Management	
Issue	<i>Records Management Program Did Not Comply With Department Standards</i> Embassy Apia did not have a records management program. According to data from the Department's Records Management Office and OIG's on-site review, Embassy Apia had not archived political and economic records since 2009. The embassy also had never retired principal officer or personnel records. ¹⁹ OIG issued a management assistance report in 2022 that highlighted issues with the Department's records retirement process. ²⁰
Criteria	5 FAM 418.9; 5 FAM 451b, c; 5 FAH-4 H-312.1b; 5 FAH-4 H-312.2
Significance	Without a records management program that follows Department requirements for organization, records retirement, disposition, and oversight, the embassy is vulnerable to inefficient information retrieval and loss of critical documentation.
Recommendation 10	
Embassy Apia should implement a records management program that complies with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)	
Management Response	Concurred.

¹⁹ When an overseas post is the personnel office for a separated employee, the employee's personnel files must be sent to the Department's Records Management Records Service Center 1 year after the employee's separation date. The Department then manages and disposes the personnel files as required by the appropriate records control schedule. See Department of State Legacy Records Disposition Schedules, "Personnel Folders of Non-American Employees."

²⁰ OIG, *Management Assistance Report: The Department of State's Records Retirement Process* (ISP-22-20, June 2022).

Information Management: Telephone Operations	
Issue	<p><i>Embassy Apia's Telephone Use Accounting Process Did Not Meet Department Standards</i></p> <p>The embassy did not have a mobile or desk telephone call accounting²¹ use policy and had not configured the call accounting system to identify and seek repayment for personal calls made from mobile and desk telephones.</p>
Criteria	5 FAM 524.1b, c; 5 FAM 525a, c; 5 FAM 511c(4)
Significance	By not adhering to the Department's telecommunications management standards, the embassy risks degraded systems performance and using government funds to pay for personal calls made from mobile and desk telephones.
Recommendation 11	
Embassy Apia should bring its telephone use accounting process into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)	
Management Response	Concurred.

²¹ According to 5 FAH-2 H-114, call accounting is the process by which call detail records for specific, or groups of, telephone extensions are collected and recorded for billing and traffic monitoring purposes.

PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS

Section/Title	Name	Arrival Date
Chiefs of Mission:		
Deputy Chief of Mission	Daniel J. Tarapacki ^a	8/2024
Chiefs of Sections:		
Political-Economic	Donald Alderman	5/2024
Public Diplomacy	Laila Gillam	9/2024

^a At the time of this inspection, Daniel J. Tarapacki served as Chargé d’Affaires, ad interim.

Source: Generated by OIG from personnel data provided by Embassy Apia.

APPENDIX A: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

This inspection was conducted from April 7 to July 29, 2025,¹ in accordance with the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation, as issued in 2020 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, and the Inspections Handbook, as issued by the Office of Inspector General (OIG) for the Department of State (Department) and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM).

Objectives and Scope

The Office of Inspections provides the Secretary of State, the Chief Executive Officer of USAGM, and Congress with systematic and independent evaluations of the operations of the Department and USAGM. Inspections cover three broad areas, consistent with Section 209 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980:

- **Policy Implementation:** whether policy goals and objectives are being effectively achieved and U.S. interests are accurately and effectively represented; and whether all elements of an office or mission are being adequately coordinated.
- **Resource Management:** whether resources are being used and managed with maximum efficiency, effectiveness, and economy; and whether financial transactions and accounts are properly conducted, maintained, and reported.
- **Management Controls:** whether the administration of activities and operations meets the requirements of applicable laws and regulations; whether internal management controls have been instituted to ensure quality of performance and reduce the likelihood of mismanagement; and whether instances of fraud, waste, or abuse exist and whether adequate steps for detection, correction, and prevention have been taken.

Methodology

OIG used a risk-based approach to prepare for this inspection. OIG conducted portions of this inspection remotely and relied on audio- and video-conferencing tools in addition to in-person interviews with Department and other personnel. OIG also reviewed pertinent records; circulated surveys and compiled the results; and discussed the substance of this report and its findings and recommendations with offices, individuals, and organizations affected by this inspection. OIG used professional judgment and analyzed physical, documentary, and testimonial evidence to develop its findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations.

OIG assessed executive direction based on interviews, staff questionnaires, and OIG's review of documents and observations of embassy meetings and activities during the on-site portion of this inspection. OIG assessed the embassy's policy and program implementation, which includes political and economic, public diplomacy, foreign assistance, and consular operations, through a review of the embassy's advocacy and analysis work, section leadership, strategic

¹ The issuance of this report was delayed due to the lapse in appropriations, which began October 1, 2025, and ended November 12, 2025.

planning and reporting, knowledge management, grants administration, program management and exchanges, media engagement, and oversight of American spaces. OIG also reviewed Embassy Apia's provision of U.S. citizen services, crisis preparedness, management controls, visa services and processing, and fraud prevention programs. To address resource management, OIG reviewed internal control systems in facility management, general services, financial management, and human resources. Finally, OIG assessed Embassy Apia's computer network operations, information systems and administration of mobile computing devices, mail and pouch services, cybersecurity practices, records management, and telephone and emergency communications systems.

APPENDIX B: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

December 17, 2025

UNCLASSIFIED

TO: OIG – Lisa Rodely, Acting Assistant Inspector General for Inspections

FROM: Dan Tarapacki, Chargés d'affaires, Embassy Apia, Samoa

SUBJECT: Response to Draft OIG Report – Inspection of Embassy Apia, Samoa

Embassy Apia has reviewed the draft OIG inspection report. We provide the following comments in response to the recommendations provided by the OIG:

OIG Recommendation 1: PDS

Embassy Apia, in coordination with Embassy Wellington, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Bureau of Global Public Affairs, should develop a social media strategy and a crisis communications plan for Samoa. (Action: Embassy Apia, in coordination with Embassy Wellington, EAP, and GPA).

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with this recommendation.*

Both the strategy and social media plans are being drafted and will be finalized by January 2026.

OIG Recommendation 2: ORSC

Embassy Apia should bring its consular interview facilities into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia).

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

Working with ORSC in Manila, post has submitted a request to OBO for prioritization on replacing the current microphone system.

The request has been submitted as a FWP (Facility Work Plan) for restoration funds through OBO/FAC's GMMS. ORSC will assist with the FWP submittal and coordinate with Desk Officers.

Recommendation 3: ORSC

Embassy Apia, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should evaluate all residential properties for seismic risk in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia, in coordination with OBO).

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

Working with OBO and OSRC, the two leased residential properties will be assessed for any seismic risk in accordance with Department standards through a multi-tiered process, beginning in June 2026. Any identified risks will be mitigated by working with the landlord and post's POSHO.

Recommendation 4: ORSC

Embassy Apia, in coordination with the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, should bring its fire protection and safety, health, and environmental management programs into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia, in coordination with OBO).

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

Post, by way of its regional FM at ORSC Manila, is working with OBO's Safety, Health, and Environmental Management (SHEM) and Fire Protection divisions to complete required inspections, update documentation, and address any identified deficiencies through corrective measures and staff training. Embassy Apia will continue to coordinate closely with OBO to ensure all program elements meet Department requirements and ensure compliance on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 5: MRSS/GSO

Embassy Apia should bring its contract files into compliance with Department and federal requirements. (Action: Embassy Apia)

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

The MRSS Contracting Officer is scheduled to visit Apia within the next six months of 2026 (subject to travel funding under CR rules) and will review the referenced contracts. In the event of a travel ban due to CR rules, MRSS will work with post to accomplish the same result but will use a video review and that mechanism to ensure compliance. Since taking over procurement responsibilities in March of 2025, MRSS procurement has ensured that NDAA compliance (either through verification or approved waivers) and DBA insurance and J&As for sole source awards have been applied to Apia contracts.

Recommendation 6: MRSS/GSO

Embassy Apia should bring its property management program into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

MRSS staff are scheduled to visit Apia in February 2026 and will review the referenced property deficiencies. MRSS currently works with post to provide receiving training and assist post in monitoring and entering receiving reports to create and track property records. Additional training will occur when MRSS travels to help post conduct their annual inventory. The Accountable Property Officer will also include spot checks during their visits to post. Tracking of uniforms and PPE will also be reviewed.

Recommendation 7: MRSS/DT

Embassy Apia should create budget and training plans for the Diplomatic Technology unit. (Action: Embassy Apia)

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

Post will implement this recommendation through the Merit-Based Compensation (MBC) process to ensure alignment with mission priorities and resource allocation. This approach will allow the DT unit's contributions to be formally recognized and incentivized in accordance with performance and mission impact.

To support the professional development of DT unit staff, the National Foreign Affairs Training Center's School of Applied Information Technology (NFATC SAIT) provides two fully funded Diplomatic Technology training opportunities annually. Embassy Apia will ensure these opportunities are strategically utilized to build technical capacity and align staff skills with evolving mission needs.

In addition to SAIT offerings, external training such as Consular-specific IT training was undertaken in December 2025. Post will continue to identify and pursue relevant external training opportunities that enhance the DT unit's ability to support mission operations effectively.

Any additional funding requirements beyond what is provided by SAIT will be identified through a structured training needs assessment and incorporated into the post's budget planning cycle. This will ensure the DT unit has the necessary resources to meet both current and future operational demands.

Embassy Apia anticipates full implementation of this recommendation within one year, by November 30, 2026. Progress will be reviewed semi-annually to ensure timely execution and alignment with mission objectives.

Recommendation 8: MRSS/DT

Embassy Apia should implement a local configuration management protocol in accordance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

MRSS has assigned an Information Systems Security Officer (ISSO) who will oversee the development and implementation of a formal change control protocol. This protocol will be designed to ensure that all system modifications are properly documented, reviewed, and approved in accordance with Department of State cybersecurity and configuration management standards.

As part of this effort, the ISSO will conduct a comprehensive review of existing local change control practices and identify any gaps or inconsistencies. A key component of the protocol will be the establishment of a Configuration Management Group, which will be responsible for reviewing proposed changes, maintaining version control, and ensuring that all updates are implemented securely and consistently across systems.

The ISSO will also coordinate with relevant stakeholders, including IRM leadership and regional cybersecurity personnel, to ensure that the protocol aligns with Department-wide policies and best practices. Training and awareness sessions will be conducted for DT unit staff to ensure proper understanding and adherence to the new procedures.

Embassy Apia anticipates full implementation of this recommendation within one year, by November 30, 2026. Progress will be tracked quarterly, with key milestones including protocol drafting, CMG formation, and staff onboarding.

Recommendation 9: MRSS/DT

Embassy Apia should implement a knowledge management process for capturing, sharing, transferring, and retaining information related to managing computer, telephone, and radio operations. (Action: Embassy Apia)

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

In coordination with the MRSS DT team, the embassy is actively developing a comprehensive strategy and digital portal to house all Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). This centralized portal will serve as a single source of truth for mission-critical processes, ensuring that SOPs are consistently maintained, version-controlled, and readily accessible to all relevant staff.

The portal will support effective knowledge management, reduce operational risk, and enhance continuity during staff transitions or emergency scenarios. It will also include metadata tagging, search functionality, and access controls to ensure usability and security.

The DT team will lead the technical development of the portal, while section leads will be responsible for reviewing and updating their respective SOPs to ensure accuracy and alignment with current practices. Once launched, the portal will be integrated into onboarding and training processes to reinforce its use as a daily operational resource.

Embassy Apia anticipates full implementation of this recommendation within six months, by May 31, 2026. Progress will be monitored monthly, with key milestones including content consolidation, portal deployment, and user training.

Recommendation 10: MRSS/GSO

Embassy Apia should implement a records management program that complies with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation. Post has designated a Post Records Officer. This officer will provide technical assistance and support to post personnel in maintaining records and coordinating annual records disposal and retirement. Remedial work has begun and is an on-going effort.*

Recommendation 11: MRSS/DT

Embassy Apia should bring its telephone use accounting process into compliance with Department standards. (Action: Embassy Apia)

Management Response: *Embassy Apia concurs with the recommendation.*

Post will collaborate with the Regional Diplomatic Technology Center (RDT) to implement Callbill and other telecom management tools to strengthen oversight of mobile and telecommunications expenses.

In particular, Brightfin Reports, generated from Brightfin, the Department's Telecom Expense Management System (TEMS), will be utilized to monitor mobile usage, track spending trends, and ensure accurate accounting. These tools will help Post proactively manage telecom resources, identify anomalies, and ensure compliance with Department policies.

Embassy Apia will also ensure that relevant staff are trained on the use of these tools and that reporting is integrated into routine financial and operational reviews. Full implementation of this recommendation is expected by November 30, 2026. Progress will be reviewed quarterly in coordination with RDT and MRSS DT.



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